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Rasputin: A Life

Joseph T. Fuhrmann

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In this rich and learned book. Fuhrmann presents a detailed biography of Rasputin well integrated with discussions of the religious social, and political context of the times. Even if the subject were not lurid and fascinating, this book would provide useful insight into Russian life at several levels--from Siberian peasantry to the court in St. Petersburg. . . . Control of the sources and the literature and the author's willingness to offer clear choices in judging some of the more controversial aspects of Rasputin's career help make the work very useful. Among many contributions worth noting is Fuhrmann's clear exposition of Rasputin's relationship with the official church, explained more thoroughly and sympathetically than in any other account in English. In sum, the book offers sound scholarship on important matters and will make a useful contribution to almost any collection on modern Russia.

Choice

Historian and Russian scholar Joseph Fuhrmann probes the life and times of Grigory Rasputin and offers the most thoroughly researched biography yet of the holy man who hastened the collapse of an empire. In a fast paced narrative, his book recounts Rasputin's journey from his peasant origins in Siberia to his powerful position at the right hand of the tsar and tsarina, Nicholas and Alexandra. Fuhrmann taps heretofore unused sources and puts to rest the many myths surrounding this notorious character. He documents the precise degree of influence Rasputin exerted on the Russian government, as well as the conspiracy that took Rasputin's life, the murder itself, the investigation, and the final unmasking of the culprits.

Rasputin; A Life portrays the complex character of a greedy libertine who gained unlimited power and yet sincerely followed a religious vocation. In addition, Fuhrmann brings to life more than a dozen secondary characters that were important in the life of Rasputin, among them Anna Vyrubova, weak and gullible, the empress's best friend, boundlessly devoted to Rasputin and a contact between him and Alexandra, and Pitirim, the homosexual metropolitan of Petrograd, who Rasputin had appointed to the leading bishop's post in the Church. This book dramatizes the Russian empire in an age of crisis, war, and revolution. Students and scholars will find insight in this detailed and scholarly account of turbulent times. The general reader will find an unforgettable journey through turn of the century Russia.

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